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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001173

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SUBJECT: ANTI-SECESSION LAW: TAIWAN CALLS FOR  
INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

REF: TAIPEI 1085

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

1. (C) Summary. Taipei is aggressively courting international support in its opposition to Beijing's Anti-Secession Law. Taiwan diplomats and representatives abroad have been tasked with lobbying host governments, and President Chen has given interviews to the foreign media. On March 15, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mark Chen convened a meeting of Taipei's foreign diplomatic missions and representative offices to elicit international support. Painting Taiwan as the aggrieved party and Mainland China's lack of democracy as the root cause of cross-Straits instability, Taiwan officials presented a package they hoped would appeal to the international community, especially the European Union and the U.S. Taipei's international outreach is also targeted at Taiwan's domestic political audience, to seek support for the government's response to date and reduce pressure on President Chen to take stronger measures that would have long-term consequences for cross-Straits relations. End Summary.

2. (U) Minister of Foreign Affairs Mark Chen (Tang-shan) invited all diplomatic missions and representative offices to a meeting at MOFA on March 15 to lay out Taiwan's case against Mainland China's Anti-Secession Law. Chen announced "the Republic of China's solemn protest" against China's "anti-separation law." Terming the law a "unilateral change" to the status quo that threatened the peace and stability of the region, Chen appealed to the international community to jointly condemn China's action. Many in the international community saw Taiwan as the troublemaker, Chen lamented, a misunderstanding that the Anti-Secession Law should clarify. The real threat to cross-Straits stability, he argued, was the lack of democracy in Mainland China; only political reform there would enable peaceful resolution of the cross-Straits situation.

3. (U) Stating that the Anti-Secession Law provided "a blank check" for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to annex Taiwan, Chen called on the European Union to recognize China's military threat against Taiwan and "not lift its arms embargo on China." Such military sales, he argued, "threaten the security of the region." Chen concluded with the cryptic comment that the Taiwanese Government would adopt "some necessary measures" to deal with the Anti-Secession Law.

4. (U) In his impromptu follow-on remarks, Chen took particular umbrage at China mistranslating its "anti-separation law" into "anti-secession law," with the obvious analogy to the U.S. fight against Southern secession during the Civil War. "A ridiculous comparison," he scoffed, since Taiwan had been separate from mainland China since 1895. Chen again called on the international community to not be complacent, but to condemn the Anti-Secession Law, offering his own historical analogy -- neutrality in the 1930's resulted in Hitler's genocide against six million Jews.

5. (U) In a more scholarly vein, Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Deputy Chair (and former Academia Sinica researcher) David Huang explained that Mainland China had simply miscalculated. When the pro-independence Pan-Green faction failed to win a majority in the December 2004, it was too late for Beijing to stop the legislative process already underway. The last-minute changes in the Anti-Secession Law, he said, "make no difference at all" to Taiwan. The main challenge to the cross-Straits status quo "as defined by the U.S. and Japan," he said, was China's own arms build-up.

6. (U) Taiwan's greatest objection to the Anti-Secession Law, Huang continued, was that it empowered the Mainland government to decide when the law had been violated and what form the prescribed "non-peaceful" punitive action would take. This, he argued, would encourage more aggressive behavior by Beijing and the PLA. Huang insisted that both the draft counter legislation under consideration in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (LY), and the March 26 mass protest rally, were logical and understandable ways to channel Taiwan's anger over the PRC law into effective mechanisms.

7. (C) Comment. Taipei's outreach to the international

community is part of the Chen administration's effort to both gauge and influence domestic and foreign response to the Anti-Secession Law, as it works out its own policy response. Government officials highlight, and the pro-government press reports, criticism of the Anti-Secession Law from around the world, to reassure the people of Taiwan that they are not alone and that Taiwan's outrage is shared by other countries. Solicitation of international support, however, is a two-edged sword in Taiwan's complex political culture. While Taiwan officials emphasize to AIT that a strong international response will reduce pressure on the Chen government to adopt stronger measures that could affect cross-Straits prospects long-term, there are pro-independence hardliners who will use this to validate their calls for a strong reaction by Taiwan and to push for stronger countermeasures. Both President Chen and Foreign Minister Chen, himself an experienced local politician in Taiwan, are trying to prove to all stripes in Taiwan's political color scheme that they are ardently defending Taiwan while acting with restraint.

PAAL